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SCTLC

SONOMA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION & LAND USE COALITION

for response
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FEB 22 2004
MTC

February 18, 2005

Joint Policy Committee
Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter
101 8th Street
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear Joint Policy Committee:

On behalf of the SCTLC, I'm writing to support the MTC and Joint Policy Committee's steps toward connecting land use to transit.

Here in the North bay, there is a major effort to bring back rail service after a long hiatus. The cities are accustomed to providing private automobiles with every convenience, but have forgotten the patterns of land use that make rail service successful. Incentives are needed for cities to make that adjustment.

We urge you to strengthen the policy by adopting the Livable Communities Platform, which will help ensure good land use around transit stations. We know that MTC is considering a policy that calls for more housing and jobs along transit corridors. We like the emphasis on housing, but are concerned that the proposed policy leaves too much room for the possibility of poorly planned station areas. In the early stages of planning for station areas, we find that city representatives on the SMART board all like the idea of more housing at the stations, but individually, many of them want to be the exception. Let the other cities emphasize housing at stations, while they favor office and retail at their own stations.

Setting a combined threshold for housing and jobs would abet this noncooperative behavior among cities, leading to having all the station areas planned for offices and shops only, without sufficient housing. Also, a policy without specific land use and design guidelines could allow big-box stores and excessive parking, which destroy the pedestrian and bike environment. Furthermore, the current proposal does not address the need for housing affordable to families earning low incomes, the very people who need housing and use transit most.

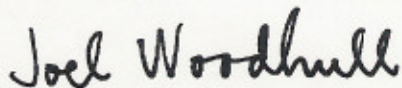
Please adopt the following Livable Communities Platform as part of a Regional Transit Oriented Development Policy. Before MTC funds transit expansion projects, cities should have to:

- Plan for a high threshold of housing along corridors, separate from a jobs threshold.
- Promote affordable housing in station areas.

- Create station area plans that include:
 - studies that analyze minimizing the space dedicated to parking,
 - bicycle and pedestrian plans for safe routes to and within station areas, and
 - blocks no more than 500 feet in length to ensure walkability.

We urge you to include policy standards that will move the Bay Area towards a more sustainable future where transit is supported by areas where people will want to live, work, and play.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joel Woodhull". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Joel Woodhull,
Chair, SCTL